DARK HORSE COMICS

#3

THE ORVILLE

THE WORD OF AVIS

PART 1 OF 2

DAVID A. GOODMAN
DAVID CABEZA
MICHAEL ATIYEH

THE ORVILLE

CREATED BY SETH MACFARLANE

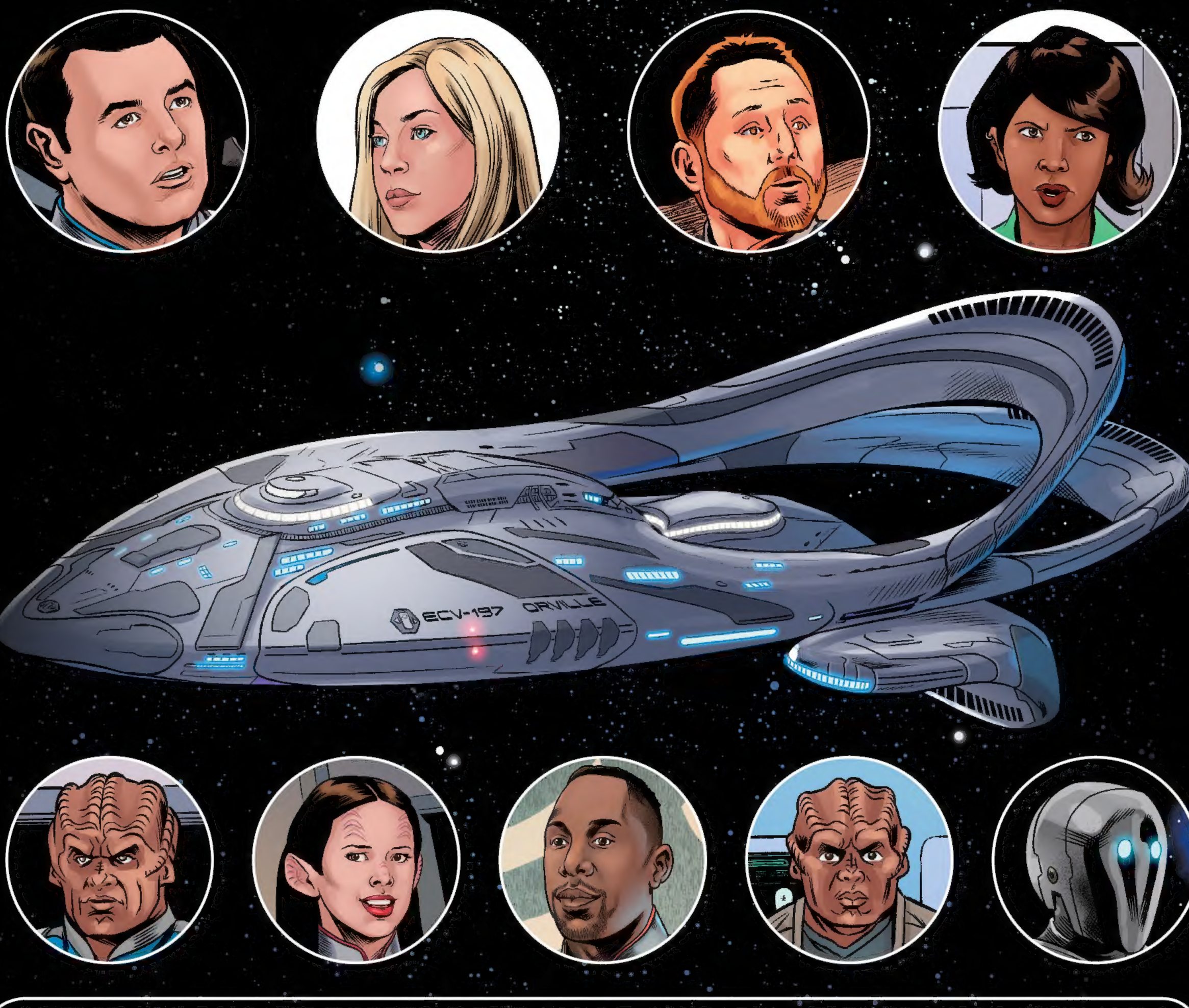
THE WORD OF AVIS PART 1 OF 2

SCRIPT
DAVID A. GOODMAN

ART
DAVID CABEZA

COLORS
MICHAEL ATIYEH

LETTERING
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S JIMMY BETANCOURT



PUBLISHER MIKE RICHARDSON | EDITOR DAVE MARSHALL | ASSISTANT EDITOR KONNER KNUDSEN
DESIGNER BRENNAN THOME | DIGITAL ART TECHNICIAN ANN GRAY

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THIS IS A GREAT PROGRAM, HUH, JOHN?

C'MON MAN, CALL ME "SALADIN..."

SORRY... "SALADIN." THAT'S A LOT OF GUYS OUT THERE. WHO ARE THEY AGAIN?

THOSE ARE THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR, THE FORCE THAT'S HOLDING JERUSALEM.

SO THIS RELIGIOUS WAR, THEY BELIEVE IN DIFFERENT GODS?

NO, I THINK THEY BELIEVE IN THE SAME GOD, JUST DIFFERENT PROPHETS... MAYBE?

KIND OF CRAZY WHAT PEOPLE USED TO FIGHT OVER.

WELL, ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS?

ALL RIGHT, YOU GUYS... LET'S KILL THOSE OTHER GUYS WHO BELIEVE IN EXACTLY THE SAME GOD THAT WE DO, BUT DIFFERENTLY! AND THAT REALLY ANNOYS US!

VICTORY!

CHARGE!

HEY, LEAVE SOME FOR ME!

"ED, YOU GOTTA DO IT WITH US NEXT TIME..."

IT WAS BRUTAL. I LIKE SEVERED TEN GUYS' HEADS.

NO THANKS.

CAPTAIN, I HAVE DETECTED A SMALL UNION TRANSPORT ON A DIRECT COURSE FOR KRILL TERRITORY.

BORTUS?

I HAVE THEM, SIR, FIVE THOUSAND KILOMETERS OFF THE STARBOARD BOW.

ALARA, HAIL THEM...

"UNIDENTIFIED SHIP, THIS IS CAPTAIN ED MERCER OF THE U.S.S. ORVILLE..."

...YOU'RE ABOUT TO CROSS INTO KRILL TERRITORY... REVERSE COURSE IMMEDIATELY.

NO RESPONSE, SIR.

GORDON, CLOSE THE DISTANCE.

BORTUS, LOCK ON TRACTOR BEAM...

WE SNAGGED 'EM.

TRACTOR LOCKED ON...

LET'S GET AS FAR AWAY FROM KRILL TERRITORY AS WE CAN. GORDON, BRING US ABOUT--

CAPTAIN, THEY HAVE NOT POWERED DOWN THEIR ENGINES.

WHAT?

ALARA, HAIL THEM AGAIN.

UNIDENTIFIED SHIP, CUT YOUR ENGINES...

NO RESPONSE, SIR...

WHAT ARE THEY DOING? THEIR ENGINES AREN'T POWERFUL ENOUGH TO BREAK AWAY.

THEIR ENGINES ARE OVERHEATING.

THEY'RE GOING TO BLOW THEMSELVES UP!

LAMARR TO BRIDGE, I GOT AN IDEA...

...I THINK I CAN LINK TO THEIR ENGINEERING PANEL AND SHUT DOWN THEIR ENGINES FROM HERE.

DO IT!

DANN, HOOK US UP...

"...WE DON'T GOT A LOT OF TIME..."

UNION TRANSPORT VESSEL

THEIR ENGINES WILL OVERLOAD...

...IN FOUR POINT SEVEN SECONDS.

IF WE CUT THE TRACTOR BEAM, IT'LL BE LIKE SNAPPING A RUBBER BAND, AND THEY'LL FLY OFF INTO KRILL SPACE.

BRIDGE TO LAMARR, STATUS!

YOU'RE CONNECTED TO THEIR CONTROL PANEL... BUT THERE'S SOME WEIRD FEEDBACK...

IGNORE IT... SCRAMMING THEIR REACTOR...

"ENGINES SHUTDOWN."

GOOD JOB, JOHN. BORTUS, TRACTOR THEM INTO THE BAY.

THAT'S A SHIP FULL OF ASSHOLES...

I CONCUR WITH LIEUTENANT MALLOY.

ALL RIGHT, WE DON'T KNOW WHO WE'RE DEALING WITH INSIDE, BUT GIVEN HOW THEY TRIED TO RUN, THEY COULD BE DANGEROUS.

WE ARE READY...

I'M VERY SORRY...

...MY NAME'S DARDEN, AND THERE'S BEEN A TERRIBLE MISUNDERSTANDING.

...I'M A XENOANTHROPOLOGIST, AND I'M AFRAID I'VE NEGLECTED THE REGULAR MAINTENANCE OF MY SHIP.

OUR SENSORS AND COMMUNICATIONS WERE OUT, WE THOUGHT YOU WERE SOME KIND OF PIRATES...

YOU WERE HEADED DIRECTLY INTO KRILL SPACE...

ALSO MY FAULT, THE NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTER IS PROVING DIFFICULT.

WE'RE JUST A GROUP OF ACADEMICS HEADING TO STUDY THE PRIMITIVE CULTURE ON MIZAR II.

WELL, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO REPORT THIS TO UNION CENTRAL.

IN THE MEANTIME, YOU'LL BE OUR GUESTS. LT. KITAN WILL SHOW YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS TO QUARTERS.

THAT'S VERY GRACIOUS OF YOU. THANK YOU.

RECORDS SAY HE IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS, AND THAT THEY WERE ASSIGNED TO MIZAR II.

NAVIGATION MALFUNCTION, COMMUNICATION MALFUNCTION, SENSOR MALFUNCTION. THEY'RE EITHER LUCKY TO BE ALIVE, OR...

YEAH. HAVE JOHN TAKE A LOOK AT THE SHIP, AND TELL ALARA TO KEEP AN EYE ON ALL OF THEM...

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU NEED THREE OF US...

BECAUSE IT'S LIKE A SECRET MISSION?

NO. WE'RE JUST REPAIRING WHATEVER NEEDS IT... BUT TELL ME IF YOU NOTICE ANYTHING UNUSUAL.

HEY, JOHN...

YEAH?

I NOTICED SOMETHING UNUSUAL.

CAN I HELP YOU?

I'M DANN. AND WE WANT TO HELP YOU. I'M DANN.

SMOOTH.

WAIT... JOHN LAMARR?

HEY, CELESTE... BEEN AWHILE.

UNION POINT GRADUATION.
SO WHERE YOU FROM, CELESTE...
I'M YAPHIT, BY THE WAY...
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE ON THE *ORVILLE.*
YEAH, CHIEF ENGINEER. I REMEMBER YOU HAVE SOME SKILLS IN THAT TOO.
OH, I LEFT IT BEHIND. I'M A XENOANTHROPOLOGIST.
WHICH IS HOW WE GOT IN THIS MESS.
WELL, WE CAN HELP YOU OUT.
JOHN LAMARR, COMING TO MY RESCUE.
YOU LIKE THE BEACH, CELESTE?
GIVE IT UP, DANN, WE'RE DONE.
MAY WE JOIN YOU, LIEUTENANT MALLOY?
UH... SURE...

YOU'RE THE GUYS FROM THE TRANSPORT...
YES, I'M DARDEN AND THIS IS KARX AND FRANZ...
WE'RE REALLY INTENT ON MEETING YOU...
HEY, I DON'T KNOW WHO TOLD YOU I CALLED YOU ASSHOLES, BUT THEY'RE LIARS...
YOU MISUNDERSTAND. WE'RE VERY INTERESTED IN YOUR TIME ABOARD THE KRILL SHIP.
OH...
BUT... THAT MISSION IS STILL CLASSIFIED. HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?
THE KRILL BIBLE, THE ANKHANA YOU COPIED ON THAT MISSION. WE WERE THE XENOANTHROPOLOGISTS TASKED WITH EXAMINING IT.
WE ARE ANXIOUS TO HEAR YOUR FIRST HAND ACCOUNT OF A KRILL RELIGIOUS SERVICE.
WELL, IT WAS CREEPY AS HELL. THEY HAD A SEVERED HUMAN HEAD IN A BOX AND THEY STABBED IT.

IT SOUNDS THRILLING. TELL US MORE.

"THESE GUYS ARE NOT ASSHOLES..."

...THEY'RE NUTJOBS. THEY WERE ACTUALLY JEALOUS OF ME GETTING TO GO TO KRILL CHURCH.

I'M MORE CONCERNED THE TEAM TASKED WITH EXAMINING THE ANKHANA ALSO JUST HAPPENED TO GET LOST NEAR KRILL SPACE.

IT WOULD SEEM AN UNLIKELY COINCIDENCE.

JOHN, ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THEIR SHIP?

WELL, THEIR SYSTEMS WERE DEFINITELY DAMAGED. BUT THEIR ENGINEER...

WHAT ABOUT HER?

I WAS AT UNION POINT WITH HER. SHE WAS VERY COMPETENT IN ENGINEERING.

IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE THAT SHE'D LET ALL THOSE SYSTEMS FAIL.

COULD THEY BE... KRILL SPIES?

I'VE EXAMINED THEM. THEY ARE WHO THEY SAY THE ARE...

...ALTHOUGH I SUPPOSE THE KRILL MIGHT HAVE SOME TECHNOLOGY THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO DISGUISE THEMSELVES.

SO... BASICALLY WE'VE GOT NOTHING.

WE'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THEM.

HEY...

JOHN, HEY.

I WAS JUST COMING BY TO SEE IF I COULD BUY YOU A DRINK.

I WISH I COULD, I HAVE TO GET TO A MEETING.

A MEETING?

YES, WE'RE GOING TO BE GETTING UNDERWAY SOON AND DR. DARDEN WANTS TO GO OVER SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR WHEN WE ARRIVE ON MIZAR II.

CAN I GET A RAINCHECK?

DEFINITELY.

SHUTTLE BAY
OBSERVATION DECK

DAD

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

CAPTAIN TOLD ME TO KEEP AN EYE ON DARDEN AND HIS TEAM.

NOW THEY'RE ALL IN THERE. DOING WHAT, I DON'T KNOW.

I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP WITH THAT.

I GOT ACCESS TO THEIR SHIP'S CONTROLS. SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM TO ACCESS THEIR INTERNAL CAMERAS.

UH... I'D NEED A SECURITY REASON TO AUTHORIZE THAT.

OH. DID YOU HEAR THAT SCREAM? I THINK SOMEONE IN THAT SHIP JUST SCREAMED.

OH. BETTER CHECK THAT OUT.

HERE WE GO. LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE ALL IN THE CARGO BAY.

OH MY GOD, ARE THEY...?

YEAH. YEAH THEY ARE.

...THEY WERE ALL IN THE SHIP'S CARGO HOLD.

DOING WHAT?

I GOTTA SHOW YOU.

WAIT, I DON'T LIKE THIS. THIS IS AN INVASION OF PRIVACY AND AGAINST REGULATIONS.

SO WE'RE NOT GOING TO WATCH IT?

OH, WE'RE GOING TO WATCH IT, I'M JUST SAYING I DON'T LIKE IT.

A BLESSED EVENING. TEMEEM EMEDEEN...

TEMEEM EMEDEEN.

OH MY GOD. IT'S A KRILL RELIGIOUS CEREMONY.

DID THEY BRING THEIR OWN SEVERED HEAD?

"DO YOU DENY WHAT WE SAW?"

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NO, CAPTAIN, WE DO NOT DENY IT.

SO YOU'RE SPIES?

NO, WE ARE NOT SPIES.

THEN KINDLY EXPLAIN WHAT YOU WERE DOING.

WE WERE WORSHIPPING AVIS. DON'T YOU BELIEVE IN FREEDOM OF RELIGION?

YOU... BELIEVE IN THE KRILL RELIGION?

YES, AND WE HAVE YOUR CAPTAIN TO THANK FOR IT...

"...FOR BRINGING ME THE ANKHANA. ADMIRAL HALSEY ASSIGNED ME AND MY TEAM THE TASK OF STUDYING IT."

WE QUICKLY LEARNED HOW IMPORTANT SCHOLARSHIP IS TO THE KRILL. STUDYING THE ANKHANA IS THE BASIS OF EVERYTHING TO THEM.

"THEN, TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHO THE KRILL WERE, WE DECIDED TO FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS.

"DAILY STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURE, PRAYER BEFORE MEALS, THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN... WE BEGAN TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE BELIEF SYSTEM."

BUT GORDON AND I WEREN'T ABLE TO COPY THE ENTIRE ANKHANA.

YES, THERE WERE HOLES IN OUR KNOWLEDGE. SO WE SOUGHT HELP.

TELEYA.

"YES. I WAS ABLE TO GET PERMISSION TO SPEAK WITH HER.

"SHE FILLED IN THE BLANK SPACES.

"SHE EVENTUALLY LED US IN RELIGIOUS TEACHING, AND WE CAME TO UNDERSTAND THE LIFE AVIS OFFERED. STRUCTURE, SECURITY..."

...PURPOSE. WE KNEW WE MUST JOIN OUR PEOPLE.

BUT THAT'S INSANE. THE KRILL WILL KILL YOU ON SIGHT.

YOU'RE WRONG. THEY WILL ACCEPT US.

LOOK, WE RESPECT ALL BELIEFS--

NO YOU DON'T.

KARX IS RIGHT.

YOU LOOK DOWN ON US FOR BELIEVING IN SOMETHING GREATER THAN OURSELVES, SOMETHING THAT GIVES US STRENGTH AND PURPOSE AND A SHARED IDENTITY.

MAYBE I DO. BECAUSE I CAN'T SEE RELIGION AS ANYTHING BUT SUPERSTITION.

WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DECIDE OUR OWN FATE.

NOT IN THIS CASE. UNDER THE LAWS OF THE PLANETARY UNION, YOU HAVE TO RESPECT THE BORDERS.

AND EVEN IF YOU WON'T, WE HAVE TO PROTECT YOUR LIVES.

YOU MAY NOT HAVE A CHOICE IN THE MATTER, CAPTAIN.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN--

MALLOY TO MERCER. ED, YOU BETTER GET UP HERE.

"I STOPPED US, BECAUSE WE'RE NOT WHERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE."

WELL, THEN WHERE ARE WE?

THE NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTER IS ON THE FRITZ. I CAN'T GET A BEAD ON OUR LOCATION.

I HAVE FOUND THE DIFFICULTY. A COMPUTER PROGRAM WAS DOWNLOADED INTO THE ENGINEERING SYSTEMS AND FOUND ITS WAY TO THE NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTER.

IT HAS BEEN MINUTELY ADJUSTING OUR COURSE OVER THE LAST SEVERAL HOURS SO WE VEERED FROM OUR PLANNED TRAJECTORY.

BRIDGE TO ENGINEERING...

I HEARD, CAPTAIN. I THINK I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. IT WAS FEEDBACK FROM THE TRANSPORT.

IT WAS THAT FEEDBACK THAT YOU TOLD ME TO IGNORE.

FEEDBACK?

YEAH. WHEN WE HOOKED INTO THE TRANSPORT'S NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTER...

...WE GOT SOME UNUSUAL FEEDBACK. I THINK THEY MAY HAVE SNUCK THE PROGRAM IN THERE.

I DETECTED THE FEEDBACK. CAPTAIN SHOULD PROBABLY KNOW THAT.

I FOUND THE PROGRAM. IT MUST HAVE BEEN CELESTE WHO SNUCK INTO OUR CONTROL COMPUTER...

...IT'S BEEN SLOWLY PUTTING US ON A DIFFERENT COURSE.

SO THE QUESTION IS, WHERE ARE WE?

I HAVE DETERMINED OUR COORDINATES.

I DON'T THINK I WANT TO KNOW.

I THINK YOU ALREADY DO.

WE ARE IN KRILL TERRITORY...

"...APPROXIMATELY THIRTY-FIVE LIGHT YEARS ACROSS THEIR BORDER."

TO BE CONTINUED...